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#2 IN A NINE-ISSUE LIMITED SERIES

SECRET WARS II

QUOTH THE BEYONDER:

"I'LL TAKE MANHATTAN!"

Beyond time, space, and the myriad dimensions lies another universe to which our own is as a droplet of water to the ocean. The One Who Is All in that other universe has learned of our universe and has come here to walk among us, that he might come to understand the essence of humanity.

The fragile Earth trembles beneath his feet, dreading his godlike omnipotence.

Stan Lee PRESENTS: SECRET WARS™ II

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"I'LL TAKE MANHATTAN..."

A FIGURE MATERIALIZES ATOP ONE OF THE TWIN TOWERS OF THE WORLD TRADE CENTER AND PONDERS...

IT HAS BEEN AN EVENTFUL FEW DAYS SINCE HIS ARRIVAL ON EARTH. HE HAS SEEN MUCH ...YET UNDERSTOOD LITTLE.

HE KNOWS THAT EXPERIENCE, NOT OBSERVATION, IS THE BEST ROUTE TO UNDERSTANDING. HE LEARNED THAT ALMOST IMMEDIATELY. STILL, HE HAS BEEN HESITANT, MOSTLY WATCHING INSTEAD OF PARTICIPATING.

ONE GOOD THING CAME OF THAT. OBSERVING THE REACTIONS OF MANY HUMANS TO CAPTAIN AMERICA CONVINCED HIM THAT A BODY LIKE CAPTAIN AMERICA'S WAS THE BEST POSSIBLE. AND SO HE CREATED ONE FOR HIMSELF.

HIS FEW TENTATIVE CONTACTS WITH HUMANS, HOWEVER, HAVE BEEN VERY REWARDING -- ESPECIALLY HIS BRUSHES WITH THE X-MAN RACHEL.

THUS, HE IS CONVINCED NOW THAT IN ORDER TO FULLY UNDERSTAND HUMANS HE MUST TRULY BECOME HUMAN.

IT'S SETTLED.

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IT IS TIME TO MAKE A COMMITMENT TO HUMAN FORM. NO MORE BRIEF FORAYS INTO PHYSICAL EXISTENCE FOLLOWED BY QUICK RETREATS TO HIS ENERGY-SELF. IT IS TIME TO GET PHYSICAL AND STAY THAT WAY.

"TIME?" ONCE IN THE "RECENT PAST," HE KNEW NOT OF "TIME," FOR IN HIS OWN REALM HE WAS ALL THINGS AND ALL THINGS WERE HIM ALL AT ONCE, EVER.

"PHYSICAL?" HAVING BUT THREE DIMENSIONS INSTEAD OF AN INFINITE NUMBER--? SUCH A THING WAS UNKNOWN TO HIM.

YET, "NOW" HE STANDS, INCARNATE IN HUMAN FLESH, HAVING HEIGHT, BREADTH, AND THICKNESS. HE IS MOVING THROUGH A FOURTH DIMENSION, "TIME," IN A SYNCHRONIZATION WITH OTHER "THINGS" AND BEINGS HERE.

THE RESULTS ARE PUZZLING.

A STRANGE... SENSATION WASHES OVER HIM. IT SEEMS TO INCREASE IN DIRECT RELATION TO THE MOVEMENT OF AIR AROUND HIM-- THE COOL MORNING BREEZE.

HIS BODY BEGINS TO SHIVER. ALREADY HE HAS A NEW EXPERIENCE TO PONDER!

HE DESIRES MORE. HE DECIDES TO GO AMONG THE HUMANS WHO SEEM TO MILL ABOUT IN GREAT NUMBERS ON THE MAIN HORIZONTAL SURFACE FAR BELOW AND SEEK ENLIGHTENMENT.

HIS BODY PLUNGES TOWARD THE MAIN HORIZONTAL SURFACE. THAT SEEMS GOOD.

AND, YET... IT DOESN'T SEEM QUITE RIGHT. SOME BUILT-IN IMPULSE, SOME INSTINCT WITHIN THIS BODY ARGUES AGAINST THIS... FALLING.

HE MOMENTARILY RESCINDS HIS COMMITMENT.

UNAFFECTED BY GRAVITY OR MOMENTUM, HIS UNPHYSICAL ENERGY-SELF HANGS SUSPENDED IN THE AIR.

REGAINING HIS RESOLVE, HE REVERTS TO PHYSICALITY.

THE INSTINCT WAS WELL-FOUNDED. THIS SMALL FALLING EXPERIENCE WAS A SIGNIFICANT SHOCK TO HIS BODY. A GREATER FALL WOULD HAVE DESTROYED IT.

THEN HE WOULD HAVE HAD TO START ALL OVER.

WHAM!

A PARALLEL BETWEEN THIS EXPERIENCE AND BEING SLASHED BY WOLVERINE'S CLAWS* OCCURS TO HIM. SUCH EXPERIENCES ARE... INTENSE.

A QUICK SCAN OF THE WORLD USING SENSES BEYOND THE LIMITS OF THIS HUMAN BODY INDICATES THAT MANY HUMANS ARE IN THE MIDST OF SUCH EXPERIENCES "NOW" ESPECIALLY IN THE IMMEDIATE VICINITY.

*LAST ISSUE -- BOB.

THEREFORE, THIS INTENSE TYPE OF EXPERIENCE BEARS FURTHER INVESTIGATION.

LATER.

AN INSTINCT -- THE SAME ONE? -- TELLS HIM THAT PERHAPS, FIRST, SUBTLER EXPERIENCES WOULD BE PREFERABLE.

HE WANDERS...

...CONSTANTLY ENCOUNTERING AWESOME MYSTERIES, SUCH AS -- CLOTHING. HE KNOWS WHAT IT IS, AND THAT IT IS GENERALLY WORN -- BUT NOT WHY.

CAFE

DIM SUM

FOR A WHILE, HE WORE CLOTHING COPIED FROM THAT OF A RANDOMLY CHOSEN HUMAN -- BUT HE DOES NOT WISH TO MERELY MIRROR HUMANITY. HE DESIRES TO UNDERSTAND. HE HAS RESOLVED NOT TO IMITATE WHAT HE OBSERVES WITHOUT A REASON, AND THEREFORE HE HAS REVERTED TO THE MINIMAL ATTIRE HE CREATED ALONG WITH THIS BODY.

DISCERNING THAT THIS ATTIRE ELICITS RESPONSES, HE IS PLEASED. PERHAPS STUDYING SUCH RESPONSES WILL LEAD HIM TO UNDERSTAND THE PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF CLOTHES.

CERTAIN HUMANS INTEREST HIM MORE KEENLY THAN OTHERS. PERHAPS THIS PHENOMENON IS RELATED TO CLOTHING. THERE SEEMS TO BE SOMETHING MORE TO IT THOUGH...

A LARGE, INORGANIC HUMAN PUZZLES HIM, TOO...

A STRONG SENSATION INTERRUPTS HIS REVERIE. IT IS... AN EMPTINESS.

THE LAST TIME HE FELT THIS SENSATION, RACHEL SPOKE TO HIM OF EATING.* "EAT," SHE SAID, "AND YOU WON'T FEEL HUNGRY." AN INSTRUCTION -- ? OR A WARNING?

*X-MEN #126 -- BOB.

"...YOU WON'T FEEL HUNGRY," SHE SAID, BUT IS NOT FEELING EXPERIENCE? DOES HE NOT DESIRE TO FEEL? HE DID NOT EAT THEM. NOW, HOWEVER...

ONE WITH MUSTARD AND A CREAM SODA!

DOG AHHA CREAM, COMIN' UP!

HE DECIDES TO RISK IT...

ONE WITH MUSTARD AND A CREAM SODA! I DESIRE TO EAT!

SO? STUFF YOUR FACE, PAL! WHO'S STOPPIN' YOU?

STUFF MY FACE??

BITE! CHEW! SWALLOW! YOU KNOW...

I SHALL!

CRRUNCHH!

EATING, IT SEEMS, IS ANOTHER INTENSE EXPERIENCE, FAR MORE SO THAN THE SENSATION OF EMPTINESS. NO WONDER RACHEL WARNED HIM AGAINST IT.

RED HOTS

AFTER HE IS FINISHED, HIS BODY WILL REQUIRE REPAIRS.

MAN, I'VE SEEN IT ALL! I KNEW THE CITY WAS GOING NUTS, BUT THIS IS TOO MUCH!

MEANWHILE, AS DARKNESS FALLS, GREAT POCKETS OF PAIN AND FLAME ERUPT ACROSS THE CITY--

--AS THOUSANDS OF NEW YORKERS SUCCUMB TO AN UNNATURAL FORCE PERVADING MANHATTAN THIS FATEFUL NIGHT. A FORCE WHICH DRIVES THEM TO HATE.

NO MORE FREAKS

HATE IS THE TRUTH!

JEWS ARE EVIL!

NO ONE IS IMMUNE. EVERY SPARK OF HATRED WITHIN EVERY BREAST HAS BEEN FANNED INTO AN INFERNO, TURNING MAN AGAINST WOMAN, CHILD AGAINST PARENT, BLACK AGAINST WHITE, JEW AGAINST GENTILE--

--HUMAN AGAINST SUPER-HUMAN.

AMERICA FOR AMERICANS

FREAKS GO HOME

MUTIE MUST DIE!

NO DIFFERENCE GOES UNNOTICED, OR UNHATED. A MOB PICKETS AVENGERS MANSION, HOME BASE OF THE WORLD'S MIGHTIEST HEROES.

THOUGH THE AVENGERS THEMSELVES ARE ABSENT, INSIDE, REED RICHARDS, A.K.A. MISTER FANTASTIC, LEADER OF THE RENOWNED FANTASTIC FOUR, WORKS FEVERISHLY IN A BORROWED LABORATORY TO DISCOVER THE REASON BEHIND THE MADNESS GRIPPING THE CITY.

JOHNNY STORM, THE HUMAN TORCH, LOOKS ON IMPATIENTLY...

ELSEWHERE, IN A RUMBLING PADDY WAGON--

MUTIE IS RIGHT

NEW YORK FOR NORMALS

--A THIRD MEMBER OF THE FOUR, THE SAVAGE SHE-HULK, AND HER BOYFRIEND WYATT WINGFOOT, WHO WERE ARRESTED UNJUSTLY A SHORT TIME AGO, RIDE TOWARD A FATE FAR DIFFERENT--AND WORSE--THAN THEY IMAGINE.

TELL ME AGAIN, WYATT... TELL ME WHY I SHOULDN'T...

BECAUSE IT'D ONLY MAKE THINGS WORSE, JEN. RIPPING THIS TRUCK APART--NOT TO MENTION THE OFFICERS WHO ARRESTED US--WOULD ONLY JUSTIFY THIS OUTRAGE!

IT MIGHT BE WORTH IT...

NOT FAR AWAY, ON MADISON AVENUE, THE FOURTH MEMBER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR, SUSAN RICHARDS, THE INVISIBLE GIRL, ESCORTS ALICIA MASTERS HOME--

-- AVOIDING THE DANGEROUS MOBS BY RENDERING HERSELF AND HER CHARGE INVISIBLE...

NOT EVEN INVISIBILITY, HOWEVER, CAN PREVENT THEIR DETECTION BY THE AUTHORS OF THE RAMPANT HATRED...

THERE SHE IS, AS I PREDICTED!

BEAUTIFUL, MASTER! YOUR PLAN IS WORKING!

IT IS TIME TO INITIATE AMASE FOUR! BEGIN YOUR METAMORPHOSIS!

YES, MASTER! IT TAKES NO MORE THAN THE BLINKING OF AN EYE FOR ME TO DROP THE SHAPE I CURRENTLY WEAR...

...IN FAVOR OF ONE THE INVISIBLE GIRL WILL FIND MORE TRUSTWORTHY!

EXCELLENT! NOW, GO AFTER HER--AND DO NOT FAIL ME!

FOR MORE OF THE STORY, SEE FF'S #280 AND 281 --BOB.

SECONDS LATER...

SUE, DARLING, WAIT--! I NEED YOUR HELP!

WHAT IS IT, REED? WHAT'S WRONG?!

YOUR CLOTHES--! THAT ISN'T WHAT YOU WERE WEARING! HOW DID--?!

THAT'S NOT IMPORTANT! WHAT IS IMPORTANT IS THAT I JUST GET CLOSE ENOUGH TO TOUCH YOU--

--SO I CAN IMBUE MY HATE-STIMULUS INTO YOU DIRECTLY... FULL FORCE!

OHH!

YOU'RE NOT REED RICHARDS! WHO ARE YOU?!

THE IMPOSTOR'S ANSWER IS A BACKHAND BLOW WHICH SENDS THE BLIND WOMAN SPRAWLING TO THE PAVEMENT--

--AND, MOMENTS LATER...

THIS CLOTHING YOU GAVE ME FEELS SO RIGHT! IT REVEALS THE VERY ESSENCE OF THE HATRED I FEEL INSIDE!

AND WHO DO YOU HATE MOST?

REED RICHARDS!

YOUR HUSBAND?

NO! I AM NO LONGER SUSAN RICHARDS--! NO LONGER "THE INVISIBLE GIRL!" NEVER AGAIN! NOW I AM MALICE--! THE MISTRESS OF HATE!

AND NOW, YOU BELONG, BODY AND SOUL TO ME... THE HATE-MONGER!

ELSEWHERE, THE ONE FROM BEYOND WALKS PASSIVELY AMID THE HATRED WHICH FLOWS LIKE A FLOODTIDE THROUGH THE STREETS, EDDYING INTO POOLS OF SEETHING VIOLENCE--

--QUITE UNAWARE THAT THE TURMOIL AROUND HIM IS AT ALL EXTRAORDINARY.

HE DOES NOTICE THE MANY TRANSPARENT WALLS BEHIND WHICH LIE HUGE QUANTITIES OF CLOTHING--

--WHICH CONTINUES TO PUZZLE HIM.

KERASH!!

A HAND-DELIVERED MISSILE SHATTERS A WINDOW--

--AND THE WAY TO EXPLORATION LAYS CLEAR-- A VIRTUAL INVITATION.

HE ACCEPTS.

I BEG YOUR PARDON, SIR--! OUR WINDOW--! D-DID YOU JUST BREAK OUR WINDOW?

NO.

BUT...BUT YOU *CAME IN* THROUGH THE WINDOW!

IT WAS OPEN.

UH... I SEE...

MAY I HELP YOU?

YES! WHY ARE CLOTHES?

YES! WHAT IS THE PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF CLOTHING? AND, WHY IS EATING?

YOU *MUST* BE FROM OUT OF TOWN...

SIR...UH... I DON'T THINK I CAN HELP YOU! DON'T YOU HAVE ANY RELATIVES WHO CAN EXPLAIN THESE THINGS TO YOU? PERHAPS A *FRIEND*...

A FRIEND?

YES! FIND SOMEONE YOU *KNOW*-- AND TALK TO HIM OR HER!

I SHALL!

OH, GOOD!

EXIT

MOMENTS LATER...

I SHALL FIND SOMEONE I KNOW...

REACHING OUT WITH SENSES BEYOND THE LIMITS OF HIS HUMAN FORM, HE SEARCHES FOR ONE HE KNOWS. ONE HE HAS OBSERVED BEFORE--

--AND, NOT FAR AWAY, IN THE OFFICES OF NEW YORK'S LEADING NEWSPAPER, THE DAILY BUGLE, HE FINDS SUCH A BEING...

HEY, MISTER! YOU DRESS WEIRD! AND I HATE PEOPLE WHO DRESS WEIRD!

I'LL GIVE YOU TEN SECONDS TO BEAT IT--

--BEFORE I RAM THIS CLUB DOWN YOUR...

HUHHUHUH?!

NOBODY NOTICES THE SUDDEN ARRIVAL OF THE ONE FROM BEYOND--

--EXCEPT THE SERIOUS-LOOKING YOUNG MAN WHOSE UNCANNY SIXTH SENSE ALERTS HIM TO ANYTHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY-- ESPECIALLY IMMINENT DANGER...

WHERE'D THAT GUY COME FROM?

HIS MOTHER SURE DRESSES HIM FUNNY! OH, WELL... I GOT MY OWN PROBLEMS!

WHY IS CLOTHING? WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?

IS THIS NUT TALKING TO *ME*?

BROTH-*ER*! NO WONDER HE WAS MAKING MY *SPIDER-SENSE* TINGLE! HE'S AT LEAST A CERTIFIED LOONY! I WONDER HOW HE GOT INTO THE OFFICE...

AW. WHO CARES? HE'S SOMEONE ELSE'S PROBLEM NOW! I'VE GOT MY CHECK FOR THE PIX I SNAPPED OF THE RIOT AT AVENGERS MANSION--! TIME TO FOLLOW A TIME-HONORED TRADITION AND DO WHAT ALL FREELANCERS DO AFTER MONEY COMES IN--

-- *GOOF OFF* FOR AN EVENING! I THINK THERE'S A MUPPETS SPECIAL ON TEEVEE TONIGHT!

WHAT IS ITS SIGNIFICANCE? WHY IS EATING?

HUH? IT *COULDN'T* BE--! COULD IT?

NAH! HE MUST HAVE A TWIN BROTHER!

HE'S *FOLLOWING* ME!

AND NOW MY SPIDER-SENSE IS REALLY BUZZING A BLUE STREAK! THIS GUY IS MORE THAN HE SEEMS...

BUT, THEN... SO AM I!

TRAILING PETER PARKER IS ONE THING -- BUT TRAILING THE AMAZING *SPIDER-MAN* IS A WHOLE 'NOTHER TRICK!

I CAN SENSE HIM COMING... HE'S JUST ABOUT TO ROUND THE CORNER! FIRST, I'LL GIVE HIM THE SCARE OF HIS LIFE, AND THEN...

THAT'S FUNNY... ALL OF A SUDDEN... HE'S *GONE!* I-- I DON'T SENSE HIM ANYMORE... AND I CAN'T SEE HIM ANYWHERE...

BUT *NOW?* DID HE SOMEHOW REALIZE I WAS SENSING HIM AND DO SOMETHING TO EVADE MY SPIDER-SENSE... AND ALSO TURN INVISIBLE?

THAT'S... HARD TO BE-LIEVE! AND YET...

BRRRR! THIS IS DOWNRIGHT SPOOKY! MAYBE... MAYBE I HALLUCI-NATED THE WHOLE THING! I'D BETTER HEAD HOME, QUICK! I NEED TO LIE DOWN!

SECONDS LATER...

I CAN'T GET *OVER* THAT! PEOPLE DON'T JUST VANISH -- EXCEPT FOR THE *INVISIBLE GIRL* -- AND THAT SURE WASN'T HER!

LOOK! IT'S SPIDER-MAN!

HE'S RIGHT! UP THERE --! THAT *MENACE!*

IT'S PROBABLY HIS FAULT THE CITY IS GOING BERSERK!

HMF! I SHOULD HAVE WORN MY NEW, BLACK SUIT! THEN, AT LEAST, MOST OF THOSE BOZOS DOWN THERE WOULDN'T RECOGNIZE ME!

SOON...

NOBODY AROUND TO SEE ME SNEAK IN THROUGH THE SKYLIGHT! MUPPETS HERE I COME!

HOME, GRUNGY-BUT-SWEET HOME! WHEW! I FEEL BETTER ALREADY!

YEAH ... I THINK I JUST NEED TO TAKE IT EASY FOR A WHILE... HAVE A NICE GLASS OF MILK...

HMM...MAYBE THE REASON I WAS HALLUCINATING WAS BECAUSE I HAVEN'T *EATEN* ALL DAY!

IS HALLUCINATING WHY THERE IS EATING?

EYAAHHH!

WHY IS CLOTHING? WHAT IS ITS SIGNIFICANCE? YOU CHANGED CLOTHING AND OTHER HUMANS RESPONDED TO YOU DIFFERENTLY! AND YOU THOUGHT ABOUT A DIFFERENCE THAT YET ANOTHER CHANGE OF CLOTHING MIGHT MAKE!

MILK

"I SHOULD HAVE WORN MY NEW, BLACK SUIT..."

YOU WERE READING MY MIND?! GET *AWAY* FROM ME! GET OUT OF MY APARTMENT! OUT OF MY *HEAD!*

WHAM!

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THAT TYPE OF INTENSE EXPERIENCE? IT SEEMS COMMON, AND YET I CAN SEE NO REASON FOR IT!

YEAH... WELL, UH... I SUPPOSE THERE ISN'T MUCH REASON...

WHO *ARE* YOU?

I AM FROM BEYOND!

THAT'S FOR DARN SURE, BUT...

UH-OH...OH, NO... YOU'RE NOT... I MEAN ... ARE *YOU*...THE *BEYONDER?!*

I AM FROM..

BEYOND, YEAH, I KNOW! YOU ARE THE MYSTERIOUS GODLIKE BEING WHO WHISKED A BUNCH OF US SUPER-TYPES OFF TO A DISTANT PLANET TO STUDY US A WHILE AGO?!.. AREN'T YOU? WE NAMED YOU THE "BEYONDER"

BUT ONCE WE FINISHED FIGHTING THAT LITTLE SECRET WAR YOU FOISTED ON US, I--I FIGURED YOU WERE THROUGH WITH US--! BECAUSE YOU LET US COME HOME. AND...

I'M GETTING BETTER AND BETTER

AND NOW... YOU'RE *HERE*!?

I SAW YOU DESTROY A *GALAXY*... CREATE A WORLD FROM SCRATCH--! WHAT DOES SOMEONE LIKE YOU WANT *HERE*?

I DESIRE TO UNDERSTAND! I DESIRE EXPERIENCE!

OH!

IN MY UNIVERSE, I WAS ALL! HERE THERE IS MULTIPLICITY, DIVERSITY.. INCOMPLETENESS! WHY?

YOU KNOW, I WAS A SCIENCE MAJOR AT ESU... I HAD AN ACADEMIC SCHOLARSHIP...1600 ON MY SAT'S... I'M A PRETTY SMART GUY! BUT.. FOR THE MEANING OF LIFE? WOW... MAYBE YOU OUGHT TO VISIT A GURU... OR A PHILOSOPHER ...OR SOMEBODY SMARTER THAN ME, ANYWAY!

BETTER...

HEY I KNOW--! *REED RICHARDS!* HE'S A GENIUS! HE'S THE LEADER OF THE FANTASTIC FOUR--! YOU KNOW, THE GUY WHO CAN STRETCH HIS BODY WHO YOU TOOK TO THAT OTHER WORLD BEFORE! ASK *HIM*!

I CAN'T HELP YOU! EXCEPT FOR MY SPIDER-MAN POWERS, I'M JUST AN ORDINARY GUY!

BETTER...

I SHALL DO AS YOU SAY!

GOOD! I-- I MEAN..

BOY, I GUESS I'VE BEEN A ROTTEN HOST! IS THERE ANYTHING I CAN GET YOU? A DRINK OF WATER MAYBE?

WILL THAT RELIEVE THIS STRANGE PRESSURE-- THIS FULLNESS I FEEL IN MY LOWER ABDOMEN?

UH... NO, IT'LL PROBABLY MAKE IT WORSE! SOUNDS LIKE YOU HAVE TO, UH... GO TO THE BATHROOM!

EXPLAIN!

OBOY...

MOMENTS LATER...

RIGHT IN THERE...

JUST CALL ME IF THERE'S A PROBLEM ..

"IF THERE'S A PROBLEM..! IF THERE'S A PROBLEM--! THE BEYONDERS IN YOUR BATHROOM, JERK! OF *COURSE* THERE'S A PROBLEM!

BUT WHAT AM I GOING TO DO? I HARDLY BELIEVE THIS IS HAPPENING!

THE EXPERIENCE IS CONSUMMATED!

GOOD! LISTEN MAYBE WE SHOULD TALK SOME MORE! MAYBE YOU SHOULDN'T JUST --

I SHALL GO TO REED RICHARDS!

NO *WAIT!*

GREAT! JUST GREAT! NOW I'VE SICCED HIM ON THE FF!

I'D BETTER FIND REED BEFORE THE BEYONDER DOES AND WARN HIM!

SO MUCH FOR GOOFING OFF...

MEANWHILE, IN MIDTOWN, **MUCH** HAS TRANSPIRED. FIRST THE SHE-HULK, THEN REED RICHARDS, HAVE SURVIVED VICIOUS ATTACKS BY SUSAN RICHARDS IN HER **MALICE** PERSONA--

➡MOREOVER, REED HAS MANAGED TO BREAK THE HATE MONGER'S HOLD UPON HER.*

NOW, REUNITED, THE FANTASTIC FOUR HAVE HUNTED DOWN THE HATE MONGER...

HE'S TURNING ALL THE CROWDS AGAINST US!

THE PERFECT DEFENSE! HE KNOWS WE WON'T HURT THEM! BUT KEEP HOLDING THEM AT BAY, TORCH!

*AS SHOWN IN F.F. #281 - 1986

I HAVE A PLAN!

UNSEEN IN THE SHADOWS, THE MYSTERIOUS FIGURE WHOM THE HATE MONGER CALLS MASTER MANIPULATES A STRANGE CONTROL DEVICE, SEEKING TO THWART REED RICHARDS' PLAN BEFORE IT BEGINS--

BUT, SUDDENLY, AN UNANTICIPATED FACTOR ABRUPTLY ARRIVES UPON THE SCENE...

IS HALLUCINATING WHY THERE IS EATING?

WHAT ON EARTH?!

AT THAT INSTANT, ABOVE...

Y-YEOW! WH-WHAT'S THE M-MATTER WITH ME? I'M SHAKING LIKE A LEAF! I--I'VE NEVER BEEN SO SCARED--!

MY FIREBALL--! I LOST CONTROL! IT'S GOING WILD!

REED! LOOK OUT!

DON'T WORRY, JOHNNY I'LL COVER HIM WITH AN INVISIBLE FORCE-FIELD!

AND WHOEVER THAT IS WITH HIM! WHAT'S HE DOING WALKING INTO THE MIDDLE OF A *BATTLE*? IS HE CRAZY? HE ALMOST GOT REED KILLED, DISTRACTING HIM LIKE THAT--!

THANKS, SUE!

WHAT HAPPENED, JOHNNY? IT ISN'T LIKE YOU TO PANIC!

IT WAS WEIRD--! IT JUST CAME OVER ME LIKE SOMEBODY FLIPPED A SWITCH INSIDE MY HEAD!

I'LL BET IT WAS MORE OF THAT HATE-SLEAZEBALL'S WORK! IF HE CAN MANIPULATE *HATE*, MAYBE HE CAN DO FEAR, TOO!

RATS! HE'S *GONE!*

AFTER HIM!

COME ON, REED! HE'LL GET AWAY!

I--I'M RIGHT BEHIND YOU, SUE!

WHO ARE YOU?

I AM FROM BEYOND!

THE BEYONDER! I SUSPECTED AS MUCH! CAPTAIN AMERICA WARNED ME YOU'D APPEARED ON EARTH!

NEARBY..

MASTER! THEY'RE CLOSE BEHIND--! AND THERE ARE NO CROWDS NEARBY TO TURN AGAINST THEM!

PLEASE--! USE YOUR DEVICE! TWIST THEIR EMOTIONS ONLY YOU CAN STOP THEM!

I COULD .. BUT I SHALL NOT!

MASTER, PLEASE SAVE ME! I BEG YOU! I'VE SERVED YOU WELL!

NOT WELL ENOUGH!

GOT YOU, YOU HATEFUL LITTLE SLIME!

NO-O-O!

LOOK! THE RAT HAS A BUDDY WHO'S CUTTING OUT ON HIM!

YOU CAN'T GO ANYWHERE YET, PAL! I HAVEN'T PUNCHED YOUR TICKET!

WHAT?!

WHOEVER IT WAS JUST-- JUST SLIPPED OUT! RIGHT THROUGH MY FINGERS!

AT LEAST WE CAUGHT THIS SCUM-- WHO TWISTED MY MIND AGAINST REED AND EVERYTHING I CHERISH!

DON'T HURT ME!

REED! WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN? WHAT IF WE'D NEEDED YOU?

I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU DIDN'T! I THINK YOU'LL UNDERSTAND AFTER I EXPLAIN WHO THIS IS WITH ME!

GIVE US A HINT! IS IT EDDIE MURPHY?

AFTER WHAT WE'VE BEEN THROUGH TONIGHT NOTHING WILL EVER SURPRISE ME AGAIN!

BEYARRGNH!

SPAK

PUM!

JUSTICE IS SERVED!

I -- I TAKE IT BACK!

IT WAS SOME CRAZY VIGILANTE WITH A -- A WEIRD *RAYGUN*! HE SPLIT WHILE WE WERE STANDING HERE GAPING! COME ON! MAYBE WE CAN STILL CATCH HIM!

NO, SHE-HULK! STAY HERE!

BUT... THAT MURDERER--!

THERE WAS NO MURDER! I'M VERY CERTAIN THAT THE HATE MONGER WAS MERELY A HUMANOID *CONSTRUCT* AND NOT ACTUALLY ALIVE! I ALSO HAVE A HUNCH ABOUT THE IDENTITY OF THE MASTERMIND BEHIND HIM--

-- BUT WE HAVE A MORE PRESSING CONCERN RIGHT NOW!

REED, IF YOU KNOW WHO IS TRULY RESPONSIBLE FOR WHAT HAPPENED TONIGHT, THEN *LEAD* US TO HIM! *NOW!*

I WANT HIM TO PAY FOR WHAT HE DID TO ME! WHOEVER THIS IS -- HE CAN *WAIT!*

THE MULTIPLICITY AND DIVERSITY OF THE UNIVERSE IS CONFUSING

THE HUMAN CONDITION DOESN'T OFTEN FALL INTO NEAT, ORDERLY PATTERNS! TONIGHT FOR EXAMPLE--! SO MUCH HAPPENED SO MANY PEOPLE WERE INTERACTING AT ONCE--

FRANKLY, I'M AT A LOSS TO ACCOUNT FOR THAT MYSTERIOUS VIGILANTE WHO DESTROYED THE HATE MONGER! THE WEAPON HE USED IS NOT COMMONLY KNOWN

I DON'T BELIEVE THAT REED'S IGNORING ME.

THERE MUST BE A REASON, SUE... LIKE MAYBE HE'S FLIPPED HIS LID!

I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN FULLY EXPLAIN THE INTERACTIONS UP OUR UNIVERSE TO YOU

I SHALL SEEK ELSEWHERE

WAIT! DON'T

GO

HE'S GONE! GONE!

BLAST IT! I HAD A CHANCE TO REACH HIM... COMMUNICATE...

REED I DON'T KNOW WHAT ALL THIS IS ABOUT BUT I NEED YOU I NEED YOU NOW! DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND?

I--I OF COURSE OUR--WE! BUT

THAT WAS THE BEYONDER! HE... HIS POWER IS UNIMAGINABLE! GODLIKE! A CHANCE TO COMMUNICATE WITH SUCH A BEING... / IT IS IMPORTANT THAT

NOT NOW REED! I NEED YOU NOW AM I IMPORTANT?

HIGH ABOVE, SPIDER-MAN SWINGS BY, UNAWARE THAT THE FANTASTIC FOUR ARE ALMOST DIRECTLY BELOW HIM, HIDDEN IN THE SHADOWS

THIS IS LIKE LOOKING FOR A NEEDLE IN NEBRASKA! BUT WHAT ELSE AM I GOING TO DO? THE BUS STATION LOST AND FOUND ISN'T OPEN NOW!

ELSEWHERE

ASKING QUESTIONS OF ONES KNOWN TO ME HAS AVAILED ME NO UNDERSTANDING

EXPERIENCE IS THE BEST TEACHER!

PERHAPS, EVENTUALLY I SHALL UNDERSTAND THIS IF I EXPERIENCE IT!

YOU DIDN'T PAY FOR THAT!

PAY?

IT ISN'T HONEST JUST TO TAKE THINGS... UNLESS SOMEBODY THREW THEM AWAY, OF COURSE! THAT'S *SALVAGE!* OTHERWISE, YOU HAVE TO PAY!

I'M NOT CRAZY! I KNOW HOW THINGS GOT SO BAD IN THIS WORLD! IT'S BECAUSE KIDS DON'T LEARN THE VALUE OF THINGS ANYMORE! THEY TAKE, TAKE, TAKE, BUT SOMEBODY HAS TO PAY!

BESIDES, THAT SUIT DOESN'T *FIT* YOU! IT'S TOO NARROW IN THE SHOULDERS! DON'T YOU HEAR ME? IT NEEDS MORE ROOM IN THE SHOULDERS!

LONGER SLEEVES, TOO! COME ON, LENGTHEN THOSE SLEEVES!

NOW THE PANTS...

STOP! PERFECT LENGTH!

NOW, ABOUT SHOES...

THERE! NOW YOU LOOK *HIP*! JUST LISTEN TO OLD ELSIE!

McKEES ROCKS

THE WORLD GO 'ROUND!

EVEN GET SHELTER OR FOOD OR CLOTHES WITHOUT MONEY! SOMEBODY'S GOT TO PAY!

DO THE MANY SMALL CREATURES

HERE'S MY HOUSE! RIGHT AWAY, YOU CAN SEE I AIN'T GOT NO MONEY! NOPE!

HIYA, HAG! ME AGAIN! *CHARLIE CARCRASH!* AN GONNA HELP YA! ★

I, LIKE, KNOW HOW ALL YOU BAG LADIES LIKE, HAVE THOUSANDS

LIKE, FORK OVER!

I AIN'T

COME ON, HAG! IF YOU DON'T COME ACROSS, WE'LL JUST RIP OFF YOUR BOY-FRIEND!

THIS ONE'S UP

NO-O-O! LEAVE HIM ALONE!

HEY! THIS GUY HAS EMPTY POCKETS!

THE NERVE--! LET'S SHOW HIM HOW THAT UPSETS US!

WHAK! KRAK!

STOP T' STOOD IT!

OH, I WISH I HAD SOME MONEY TO APPEASE THEM! MAYBE I GOT SOME CHANGE IN HERE...

HEY WHAT'S THIS?

GET YOUR SECRET STASH OUT OLD BROAD-- OR WE'LL BE BACK IN A WHILE TO FINISH OFF YOU AND YOUR PAL!

THAT WAS FUN!

YEAH, EVEN IF WE, LIKE DIDN'T GET NO CASH!

OH, YOU POOR MAN--!

THIS SORT OF INTENSE EXPERIENCE OFTEN SEEMS TO FOLLOW FIRST ENCOUNTERS WITH OTHERS! IS THIS THE WAY OF THIS UNIVERSE?

YES, I'M AFRAID SO. IT'S A VIOLENT WORLD. MAYBE YOU SHOULD GET PROTECTION! GO SEE *THESE* FELLOWS. THEY CAN HELP YOU.

I SHALL!

HMM! YOU'RE A FAST HEALER! YOU LOOK MUCH BETTER ALREADY!

MY! HE IS A *FAST* ONE! GONE IN A FLASH. HMF!

AND, AT THE PRESTIGIOUS PARK AVENUE OFFICE TOWER WHICH HOUSES HEROES FOR HIRE, INC.--

--THE ONE FROM BEYOND ARRIVES TO FIND...NOTHING.

IT IS THREE A.M., SUNDAY MORNING.

THOSE HE SEEKS, LUCAS CAGE, ALSO CALLED POWER MAN AND DANIEL RAND, ALSO KNOWN AS IRON FIST, ARE NOT PRESENT NOW.

LUCAS CAGE

PEERING INTO THE NOT-TOO-DISTANT PAST WITH HIS GODLIKE SENSES, HE OBSERVES THAT INDEED, THEY HAVE BEEN HERE.

ALL THAT IS NEEDED, THEN, IS TO PLUCK THEM FROM SOME PRIOR POINT IN THE TIME STREAM AND BRING THEM TO NOW.

WHAT THE--?!

HEY!

THUMP!

LUKE! WHAT HAPPENED?

I DON'T KNOW... BUT I DON'T LIKE IT... AN' I'M BETTIN' IT'S *HIS* FAULT!

THE ONE CALLED POWER MAN RUSHES TOWARD HIM -- TO *GREET* HIM, PERHAPS?

HE DECIDES THAT IT IS TIME HE ATTEMPTED A GREETING.

RRAK!

KRASSHH!

THE EXPERIENCE IS INTENSE NONETHELESS THOUGH HE CAREFULLY MATCHED HIS GREETING TO THE RECIPIENT'S DURABILITY--

--IT CAUSES DAMAGE TO HIS HAND

LUKE--!

IF YOU'RE STRONG ENOUGH TO DO THAT TO LUKE, THEN I DON'T HAVE ANY CHOICE EXCEPT TO STRIKE YOU WITH THE FULL POWER OF THE IRON FIST!

ANOTHER INTENSE EXPERIENCE!

NO NOT SO SOON.

KTHAKK!

GOTCHA, TURKEY!

LUKE BE CAREFUL!

SHUT UP FIST!

NOW MISTER, I AM GOING TO ASK YOU POLITELY-- ONCE-- TO STEP OUTSIDE SO'S I DON'T BUST UP OUR OFFICE TOO BAD WHILE I ASKS YOU SOME QUESTIONS ..

I SHALL!

HUH? HE BROKE AWAY! HOW THE--?! WHO IS THIS GUY?

HE'S HOLDING US BACK WITH SOME KIND OF FORCE! I CAN HARDLY MOVE!

HEY! HE'S HEADED FOR THE WINDOW! STOP HIM!

I'M TRYING!

LORDY! HE DONE IT! HE STEPPED OUTSIDE-- LIKE I TOLD HIM!

B BUT WE R FOURTEEN STORIES UP!

KEEESSH!

I'M LOOSE AGAIN! I GOTTA GO AFTER HIM! I CAN'T JUST LET HIM GO Ssplat!

NO, LUKE--! DON'T!

I'M HEAVIER'N HIM, SO I SHOULD FALL FASTER! ONCE I CATCH HIM MAYBE I CAN BREAK HIS FALL SOMEHOW!

IT AIN'T WORKIN'! I AIN'T GAININ'!

AW... SHEE-OOT!

HUH?

HEY!

REVERTING TO ENERGY FORM, THE ONE FROM BEYOND INTERRUPTS HIS PLUNGE...

LUKE CAGE, HOWEVER...

KTHOOM!

LUKE! LUKE, DON'T MOVE! ARE--ARE YOU HURT BAD?

WHAT DO YOU THINK?!

BUT I'LL FEEL BETTER AFTER I KILL HIM!

OUT OF MY WAY, FIST!

NO!

NO, LUKE!

I'M NOT GOING TO LET YOU HURT HIM!

BECAUSE YOU MIGHT GET HIM MAD!

YOU DON'T STAY ALIVE FOR LONG ON THE STREETS ASKIN' QUESTIONS FIRST...

LET'S TRY IT ANYWAY...

WELL, FRIEND, WOULD YOU CARE TO EXPLAIN WHO YOU ARE, WHAT YOU WANT WITH US, AND WHAT IS GOING ON HERE?

I AM FROM BEYOND! IN MY OWN REALM, I AM ALL! BUT HERE THERE IS MULTIPLICITY... HERE THERE IS DIVERSITY... HERE THERE IS INCOMPLETENESS WHICH I DO NOT UNDERSTAND! I DESIRE TO UNDERSTAND!

I...SEE... BUT IT WAS BROAD DAYLIGHT A MOMENT AGO, AND NOW IT'S OBVIOUSLY LATE AT NIGHT--! HOW..?

I MOVED YOU THROUGH TIME TO NOW!

OH...

I'M NOT ENTIRELY SURE WHY... BUT I BELIEVE YOU! YOU ACTUALLY ARE A BEING FROM... *SOMEWHERE ELSE*, AREN'T YOU? AND YOU'RE HERE TO LEARN THE WAYS OF MEN--?

YES!

FRIEND, IF YOU TRULY COME FROM A PLACE OF UNITY, WHOLENESS AND COMPLETENESS... YOU ALREADY *KNOW* WHAT WE HUMANS DREAM OF AND STRIVE TO ATTAIN! WHY, TO BE ONE WITH THE UNIVERSE--THERE IS NOTHING ELSE FOR YOU TO LEARN! AND... *HEY!*

YOU GOTTA EXCUSE MY PARTNER! BEIN' A MARTIAL ARTIST, HE'S HUNG UP ON ALL THAT *ZEN* BULL!

YOU OBVIOUSLY *BEEN* THERE ALREADY, AN' YOU WANT OUT--INTO THE REAL WORLD! AN', MAN, *I* CAN TELL YOU WHAT IT IS!

WHAT IS IT?

THIS IS *IT*, MAN! BREAD! CASH! GAP! WITH THIS, YOU CAN GET YOURSELF JUST ABOUT ANYTHING--INCLUDIN' THE SERVICES OF HEROES FOR HIRE! WITHOUT IT, YOU GOT *JACK!*

A LOT O' THE TROUBLE IN THIS WORLD IS BECAUSE THERE AIN'T ENOUGH OF *THIS* STUFF!

BUT... THIS IS PAPER! THERE SEEMS TO BE MUCH OF IT! IT LIES SCATTERED IN THE STREETS!

THIS KIND OF PAPER IS SPECIAL, SEE! IT STANDS FOR *GOLD*, AN' THERE AIN'T MUCH OF THAT --WHICH IS WHY EVERYBODY WANTS SOME, WHICH IS WHY IT'S VALUABLE!

UH... THE GOLD STANDARD WAS ABANDONED YEARS AGO, LUKE!

WHATEVER!

YOU GOT THAT CLEAR, NOW, M'MAN?

YES! MULTIPLICITY RESULTS IN INCOMPLETENESS! INCOMPLETENESS RESULTS IN DESIRE! DESIRE MAY BE SATED, BUT SOMEONE MUST PAY! CASH IS FOR PAYING! CASH STANDS FOR GOLD, OF WHICH THERE IS NOT ENOUGH! I UNDERSTAND!

SUDDENLY...

HEY! THERE'S THE *BEYONDER!* FINALLY!

I DON'T SEE THE *FF* AROUND -- JUST POWER MAN AND IRON FIST!

HEY, GUYS--!

SPIDER-MAN!

YEAH— BUT DO YOU KNOW WHO YOUR NEW BLOND *BUDDY* OVER THERE IS? *THAT'S* THE QUESTION!

SURE... HE'S AN IGNORANT SPACE-GEEK! SO WHAT ELSE IS NEW?

YOU *KNOW* HIM?

IT'S A LONG STORY--! HEY! WHAT'S HE *DOING?*

OUR *BUILDIN'*--!

SHES-OOT!

IT--IT ISN'T POSSIBLE... BUT...

THIS CAN'T BE FOR REAL...

RRRRRRRUMBLE!

THAT'S GOLD--! HE TURNED OUR BUILDING INTO GOLD!

WHAT'S THAT NOISE--?

RROARR!

IT CAN'T SUPPORT ITS OWN WEIGHT! IT'S COLLAPSING!

HOL-LEE MOTHER OF PEARL...

WH-WHAT'D YOU DO THAT FOR!?

TO PAY FOR THE SERVICES OF HEROES FOR HIRE! SOMEBODY MUST PAY!

C-COULDN'T YOU HAVE WRITTEN THEM A CHECK?

THIS--THIS HAS TO BE A NIGHTMARE!

I SHALL GO NOW!

ALMOST AS AN AFTERTHOUGHT, THE ONE FROM BEYOND RETURNS LUCAS CAGE AND DANIEL RAND TO THE EXACT POINT IN THE PAST FROM WHICH HE BORROWED THEM...

...LEAVING ONE SLIGHTLY STUPEFIED SPIDER-MAN STANDING IN FRONT OF A VERITABLE MOUNTAIN OF GOLD, FEELING VERY, VERY MUCH ALONE!

NEXT:

WHAT WILL SEEM LIKE A BAD DREAM (FOR A WHILE, ANYWAY) TO LUKE AND DANNY IS ALL TOO REAL TO SPIDER-MAN!

THE STORY CONTINUES IN WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #6, AND FROM THERE INTO THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #268. ALSO, OUR EPIC SAGA SPILLS INTO FANTASTIC FOUR #282. ALL THREE OF THESE ARE ON SALE SOON! DON'T MISS THEM!

ONE MONTH FROM NOW THE THREADS OF OUR TALE ARE GATHERED AGAIN IN SECRET WARS II #3, WHICH GUEST STARS DOZENS OF MARVEL STARS, INCLUDING THE AVENGERS! BE HERE FOR...

"THIS WORLD IS MINE!"